



Before You Burn

Outdoor burning, particularly in the more rural areas of Santa Rosa County, is a viable way to get rid of vegetation debris like tree branches, brush cuttings, needles, and leaves. However, each year in the United States wildfires damage or destroy thousands of acres, many of which are the unintended result of careless outdoor or open burning practices.

With proper site preparation and forethought, people can burn vegetative debris with reasonable safety. Taking the time to plan an outdoor burning project, preparing the burn site, and equipping yourself with basic fire suppression tools before lighting the match will dramatically reduce the chance of a burn pile fire getting out of control and becoming a 9-1-1 call.



Steps for a Safe Outdoor Burn

- Make sure weather conditions are safe to burn. Winds, dry conditions and low humidity may result in a red flag or even a ban on burning. Contact the Division of Forestry Blackwater Forestry Center at (850)957-6140 or check online at: www.fl-dof.com/fire_weather/forecasts.html.
- Know what you can burn- only natural vegetation like lawn trimmings, twigs, limbs, leaves, etc. can be burned. It is illegal to burn processed wood like lumber or household garbage and trash.
- Do you need a permit? Piles greater than 8 feet will require an authorization from the Division of Forestry, and must meet other requirements. Contact the Division of Forestry Blackwater Forestry Center at (850)957-6140.
- Prepare your burn site:
 - ✓ Clear the ground 10 feet on all sides of the burn area.
 - ✓ Make sure you are at least 25 feet away from any wooded area or structure, at least 50 feet from a paved public road and at least 150 feet from other occupied buildings.
 - ✓ Avoid trees with low-hanging limbs or moss.
- Have a hose or bucket of water handy.
- Stay on site until the fire is completely extinguished.
- If at any point, you feel the fire is beyond your control, immediately call 9-1-1.

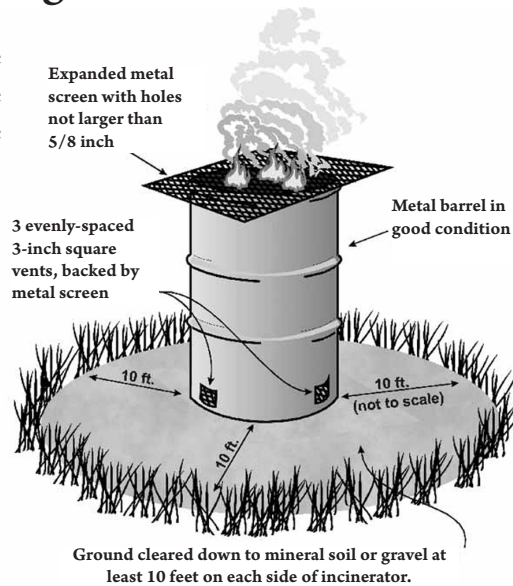
Did You Know?

- Escaped debris burning is one of the leading causes of wildfires in Florida. In fact, 80 percent of all wildfires in Florida are human caused.
- If a fire gets out of hand, not only can there be environmental damage, but you could have to pay a fine of up to \$300 and be liable for costs of suppression and damage to the property of others.
- Land-clearing, agricultural/forestry and trash burning must be done between the hours of 9 a.m. and one hour before sunset.
- For more information and facts on outdoor burning visit www.fl-dof.com.

Using a Barrel

Using a burn barrel to dispose of backyard debris can reduce the risk of wildfire. But make sure that your burn barrel:

- Is made of all-metal and is in good condition- in addition to inspecting the walls of the barrel, check the bottom to ensure that it hasn't been weakened by rust.
- Has proper ventilation- There should be three evenly-spaced, three-inch square vents around the rim near ground level. Each vent must be backed by metal screen.
- Has a metal top screen - Use 14 gauge wire mesh that is one-fourth inch or finer to keep sparks from escaping and lighting nearby vegetation on fire.



When using your burn barrel:

- Layer your materials and stir often
- Put the smallest twigs and branches, which will ignite quickly, on the bottom of the pile, and stir it often to introduce new oxygen.
- Keep leaves, needles and bark in an adjacent pile so they can be added to the burning pile after a vigorous heat source has been created.
- It is illegal to burn plastic, tires, and just about anything else that isn't from a tree or shrub.

Is it Really out?

An out of control fire can rise unexpectedly from the ashes of an outdoor burn that homeowners thought they had extinguished. Even when a fire stops smoking and appears to be out, the onset of windy and warmer weather, days or even weeks later, may re-ignite it and quickly propel into a damaging wildfire.

To ensure that a backyard debris burn is really out, follow these steps:

- Drown the fire with water, turn over the ashes with a shovel and drown it again. Repeat several times until it is dead.
- Check the burn area regularly over the next several days.
- At the onset of warm, dry weather, especially when accompanied by wind, check the burn area again, even if it is weeks after the burn.

A Safe Alternative to Burning:

Take your Yard Debris to the Central Landfill

Instead of burning your vegetative debris, take it to your local landfill. For many, it only takes a few minutes to jump in your car or truck and haul it there, and it's much better for you and everyone around you. At only \$3 for up to 360 pounds of yard debris, the landfill is a very economic means of disposal.

Never light a fire outdoors until you are sure it is legal. Be safe, not sorry!

If you have questions on outdoor burning, contact the Division of Forestry Blackwater Forestry Center at (850)957-6140



Holiday Safety Tips

- ✓ Do not burn wrapping paper in the fireplace. Dangerous sparks and flash fires are possible. Discard gift boxes and wrapping paper with the garbage and recyclable materials.
- ✓ With winter's dry vegetation, high-winds and low-humidity, wildfires can start and spread quickly.
- ✓ Never burn trees (branches or needles) in a fireplace. Firs and pines have a lot of sap, which can actually explode. Creosote deposits can also ignite in the chimney, and cause a chimney fire. Dispose of your tree at a recycling center.

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